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**PERFORMANCE AND INTERACTION DURING ‘READING HOUR’ IN A SPANISH
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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Abstract

This paper examines students' activity during reading hour in a multicultural secondary school in Madrid (Spain). It discusses two dimensions of the event: (1) How elements such as body posture, reading volume, reading speed and clarity were used by students to position themselves in relation to their linguistic competencies, the social order of the classroom and the institutional arrangements they participate in; and (2) how interactions around the text were used by students for peer play by drawing from identities formed outside the classroom. The data illustrates how reading hour was taken by students, especially by some Latin American students, to temporarily redefine aspects of the institutional order they were placed in. These results also invite complicating the outside / inside distinction by showing the multiple layers of institutional and out-of-school life that are collapsed into these categories.

Keywords: Reading – Performance – Institutions – Inside/Outside – Latin American – Micro-ethnography.

1. Introduction

Among the most debated transformations in the Spanish educational system during the last two decades is the implementation of a compulsory and comprehensive secondary educational tier for all students between 12-16 years of age, known as *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (ESO) ‘Compulsory Secondary Education’. These changes were implemented during (and as part of) Spain’s progressive incorporation into European economic and political structures and economic development which, among other things, led to an influx of economic immigrants whose children became a visible part of the student population of Spanish schools by the mid-1990s (Bartolomé, 1997). Educational policies have responded to these changes in the demographics and needs of students in a number of ways. To start, given the comprehensive and universal intentions of ESO, secondary schools were originally designed with a number of measures placed to attend to the diverse needs of the secondary school student body (i.e. a counseling department, a curriculum with certain degree of elective subjects, modified methodologies for students with special needs, etc.). However, the presence of immigrant students has involved an increase in specialized provisions, programs, policies, professionals and educational tracks that, from a critical perspective, seem to undermine the comprehensive organization of Spanish compulsory secondary education. In this context, there is concern about the role the different structures implemented in secondary education play in the creation of a stratified system in which immigrant students are placed in lower-educational tracks or geared towards the labor market while Spanish origin students move on in their academic paths and into different forms of post-compulsory secondary education - i.e. pre-university, technical training, etc. (Serra, 2008).

Several studies in Spain have shown how different actors in secondary education (students, teachers, other school professionals, parents) define and position each other, through

their linguistic practices, explicit discourses and educational decision-making, within educational institutions according to the educational trajectories and provisions they are placed in (Ponferrada, 2009; Unamuno, 2005; Moscoso, 2009). In other words, actors in the system have constructed metapragmatic identity models, explicit and implicit institutional accounts about what type of person a student is (Wortham, 2006; Agha, 2007), about Spanish secondary school students. As Wortham (2006) has pointed out, this requires taking into account at least two considerations. First, the construction of identity models involves drawing from multiple orders of social organization emerging in different spaces and timescales (Blommaert, 2005; Heller and Martin-Jones, 2001). These range from broad socio-cultural categories (i.e. categories based on established ethnic, economic or gender relations), to stable institutional devices (i.e. in the Spanish educational system) to processes that emerge in the local-interactional order. Second, social identification within educational institutions is inextricably tied to learning and academic achievement – the supposedly ‘official’ goals of schooling. Drawing on the concepts that organize this theme issue, understanding local identity models as social constructions which conglomerate elements from multiple orders of discourse involves drawing from various social spaces ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the learning scenario (Baynham, 2006). ‘Inside’ the institution may include a variety of educational programs and curricular spaces that incorporate students into a heterogeneous labeling system. Further, as is well known, classrooms are complex communicative spaces in which official-teacher led discourses co-exist and intertwine with peer structured discourses (e.g. Guiterrez, Rymes and Larson, 1995; Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006). Simultaneously, ‘outside’ students lives may refer to a variety of social fields and spatiotemporal scales (Blommaert, 2006). It may involve immediate local peer relations, neighborhood experiences, family relations and/or drawing from social categories and relations with a complex political history (cf. Moje, 2004).

This paper makes an effort to disentangle some of these complexities by examining spaces in which students, during a routine classroom activity known as ‘reading hour’, attempt to re-configure and re-define (at least temporarily) the institutional identities that are ascribed to them. I will examine how this literacy event is used by students to construct aspects of their identities and actively position themselves in relation to the institutional order they are placed in (cf. Moje and Luke, 2009) and to do so I will focus especially on the actions taken by students who are already incorporated -or in the process of entering- into lower-academic tracks, such as ‘compensatory education’, and examine how linguistic background, ethnicity and educational track are disentangled by students in ways that complicate some of the assumptions held by teachers and educators in the school. The conceptual intersection between institutional identification and the interactional order is tied to particular approaches to the study of ‘identity as performance’ that I will draw from in my analysis. One approach is found in analyses of schooling as a mechanism of economic and cultural reproduction; as Foley (1991) points out:

From a performance perspective of cultural reproduction, microevents (...) must be thought of as frequently occurring classroom dramas or rituals that all participants read as they would a cultural text. These (...) games tell their participants a story about themselves, who the winners and losers are, and how to succeed and fail. (p. 548).

Another set of concepts is found in performance-based narrative analysis as developed in the ethnography of communication (Bauman, 1986; Hymes, 1981). Classrooms events and games can certainly have speech and communicative activity as their object and when this becomes the case, classroom participants re-define language in particular social terms where evaluative

activity becomes central (Bauman, 2000) – something that is, otherwise, pervasive in formal educational settings which are structured around a logic of evaluation and classification.

With these concepts in mind I will examine three social processes that unfold during ‘reading hour’ in a Spanish secondary school classroom located in Madrid (Spain): (1) how reading performance is accomplished and assessed by students and the role these actions have in redefining competence; (2) how reading competencies, as defined and displayed by students, may be used to position students in relation to each other, including peer exclusion; (3) how interactions around the text are appropriated between peers for non-academic purposes. This case study of ‘reading hour’ requires a relatively detailed ethnographic contextualization of the research site and the socio-political processes that configure the curricular event I examine that is provided after summarizing the methodology of the study.

2. Method

The results from this paper are part of a research project focused on the educational trajectories of immigrant students in compulsory secondary education. During two academic years (2007-08 and 2008-09) a team of researchers conducted an intensive holistic ethnographic study of a public (state-run) secondary school located in a southern district of the city of Madrid (Spain). The project investigated institutional practices, peer relations and immigrant parent’s educational discourses as different social fields which play a role in students’ educational experiences (Lahire, 1998, 2007). Data collection included participant observation, formal and informal interviews, gathering documents and some audio-recordings in classrooms. We also observed and documented school events, after-school programs, teacher and staff meetings, work by the counseling department and the work of other professionals that play a role in students’

experiences such as social workers or intercultural mediators. Part of the team also conducted participant observation, interviews and some video-recordings among peer groups inside and outside school in spaces such as the school playground, parks, adolescents' homes or other youth spaces such as squatter houses, music concerts virtual communication platforms. We also conducted interviews with a group of Ecuadorian parents and observed spaces of school-family contact such as school meetings and some of the activities organized by the school parental association. Finally, we also designed a number of activities for students during class hours and an after-school workshop that generated photographs and video-recordings produced by the students about their school and out-of-school experiences.

3. Ethnographic background: Institutional categories and 'reading hour' in a Spanish secondary school

3.1. IES Central-Aluche: A public secondary school in the south of Madrid

The *Instituto de Educación Secundaria Central-Aluche* (pseudonym, ICA) is a state-run secondary school located in Latina district, a large southern district of the city of Madrid, Spain. The school was founded in the year 1988 along with other public and chartered secondary schools in the district as a response to the strong pressures to provide schools for the growing secondary school student population of the district (born in the Spanish 'baby-boom' of the 1970s). ICA is located in the intersection of two neighborhoods of the district: (1) Aluche, a neighborhood with a large middle-class population and primarily occupied by residential apartment buildings built in the 1960s-1970s and (2) Carabanchel Bajo, a historical working-class district that grew out of the migratory movements from 'the country to the city' that took

place in the 1950s-1960s. In the last few years, the district has also received large numbers of economic immigrants, primarily from Latin America (Ecuador and Bolivia especially) and at the moment approximately 19% of the district population is of immigrant origin (Municipal Census Data, year 2009). A majority of immigrant residents occupy homes within Carabanchel Bajo and surrounding neighborhoods. Despite this 'border location', ICA draws its students primarily from Carabanchel Bajo and serves a student body that is increasingly of immigrant origin and identifies itself with Carabanchel rather than the middle class homes that surround the school. Approximately 30% of the student body was of immigrant origin in the 2005-06 school-year and this figure rose to close to 50% during the 2008-09 school-year. In this last school-year, over 90% of immigrant students at ICA were of Latin American origin.

Since its inception, ICA has attempted to project itself as an academically oriented institution that is committed to prepare students for pre-university secondary education. In the late 1980s when it was founded it offered pre-university post-compulsory education and despite some attempts to simultaneously offer vocational and technical forms of secondary education these alternative paths were never implemented. With the reform of the 1990s the two strands of secondary education that the school offers are compulsory ESO for students between 12-16 years of age and pre-university Baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*) for students between 16-18 years of age. Students who want to consider technical-vocational forms of post-compulsory education must transfer to other schools after completing ESO. Following the general dynamics that were presented in the introduction of the paper, ICA has designed and implemented a number of programs designed to meet the increasingly complex educational needs of its student body. In general terms, educational programs can be designed with two alternative rationalities in mind: (a) to provide academic-educational support for students who experience difficulties during their studies but are seen as potentially capable of meeting ESO requirements; (b) to offer an

alternative educational path designed for students at significant risk of ‘dropping out’ and who are not seen as capable of completing conventional ESO. Over the years ICA has been involved in designing and implementing a variety of programs that are more in accordance with (a) and has a multi-professional counseling department that has been very active in designing these measures and/or orienting students into programs of the latter type offered in other schools of the district. As the demographics of the classroom discussed below show, placement in these programs is not color-blind and a disproportionate number of immigrant and Latin American students are placed in remedial programs or counseled to transfer to vocational programs outside ICA - for a detailed discussion of the programs, figures and the processes that construct them see Poveda, Jociles and Franzé (2009).

The diverse programs at ICA are part of the vocabulary and system that teachers and administrators at the school used to classify students. These institutional categories are also incorporated by students themselves to describe their own educational trajectories and contribute to construct their own socio-academic subjectivities (e.g. Lave, Duguid, Fernandez and Axel, 1992). This incorporation of institutional identities into students ‘vocabulary’ is visible in different pieces of ethnographic data, for example¹:

Excerpt 1: Interview fragment with Tony (T: Tony / I: Interviewer)

(...)

T: Hombre por ejemplo, es que, hombre cambiaría porque es que a algunas personas las mandan a compensatoria, y es que, que no hacen casi nada, por ejemplo a Juan no hace nada, y lo mandan a compensatoria, y es más fácil estar ahí, y yo que estudio más que Juan no me mandan allí y el encima le quedan tres y a mí ocho

¹ All interactions took place in Spanish. Throughout the paper the original extract in Spanish is presented followed by a translation into English.

I: ¿Y por qué dices que le mandaron? porque no hacía nada

T: Claro, no sé, es que supuestamente tiene más ayuda o algo de eso, no sé,

(...)

I: ¿Preferirías ir a compensatoria entonces?

J: Pues sí

(...)

(...)

T: Well, for example I, well, I would change because they send some people to ‘compensatory’ and there, they practically do nothing. For example, Juan doesn’t do anything and they send him to ‘compensatory’ and its easier being there. I study more than Juan and they don’t send me there and then he ‘flunks’ three courses and I ‘flunk’ eight

I: And why do you say that he was sent? because he doesn’t do anything

T: sure, I don’t know, supposedly he has more help or something like that, I don’t know.

(...)

I: Would you prefer going to ‘compensatory’ then?

T: Yes

Excerpt 1 is a fragment of an interview with Tony (see below), a 15 year old Ecuadorian student in his second year of ESO. It shows how he has a particular representation of the different programs that exist in the school and what is expected of students in them. In the fragment Tony, who is comparing himself with Juan (a very close friend in his peer network), establishes explicit distinctions between the support that students’ receive in the ordinary stream versus ‘compensatory education’² classes and states that he would prefer to be included in the lower

² ‘Compensatory education’ is offered for the first two years of ESO (with a possible extension into a third year) and is thought of as supplementary educational support for students with previous schooling experiences or socio-cultural backgrounds that put students at disadvantage in relation to the standard requirements of ESO.

expectation track - even though this choice decreases the probability of moving along successfully in the educational system and into pre-university post-compulsory secondary education.

3.2. 'Alternative to religious education' in the Spanish Educational System and ICA

Schools in the Spanish educational system must offer two weekly hours of religious education throughout compulsory education. This is the result of different treaties between the Spanish State and the Vatican / Catholic Church originally established in the early 1970s, current educational reforms and judicially imposed educational measures³. Schools have a mandate to include religious instruction in their curriculum but students are not required to enroll in these classes. Families may choose to opt out from these class hours and, consequently, schools must program 'alternative' activities for students who do not participate in religious education. This arrangement between religious education and its school-based alternative has a complicated relationship which has been the object of intense litigation and judicial monitoring in Spain. Religious education has to be offered as a formal subject within the school curriculum but since it is a course that is of voluntary enrolment it does not have any weight in students' formal assessment (i.e. it does not have access requirements, it does not determine promotions, it does not contribute to students grade point average, etc.). Further, since some students participate in 'alternative' activities there is an ongoing debate regarding what these activities should consist of and how they should contribute to students' education. In particular, the Catholic Church,

³ In the vast majority of cases this means offering Catholic religion, which is taught by teachers directly hired by the Catholic Church (although paid by governmental authorities). In recent years these measures have been expanded in some schools and regions to include other religious denominations, such as Evangelical Christian, Muslim or Hebrew religious education.

alongside political organizations and parties with close affinities with the Church, has litigated against ‘alternative provisions’ that either: (a) contribute to advance aspects of the curriculum which are part of students’ assessment (e.g. design supplementary subject matter tutoring, study hours, etc.); (b) allow students ‘free time’ (e.g. if religious education is scheduled in the last session of the school-day some students could complete the school day earlier).

Consequently educational authorities have had to carefully define the types of ‘alternative activities’ schools may implement. ‘Book reading’ and other measures related to the ‘promotion of reading habits’ are one type of activity schools have been able to design and implement successfully as an alternative to religious education. It is also an activity that has received support from other public institutions as part of general campaigns to raise an interest in reading among students and the general population (e.g. Colomer, 2009). Also, it can be successfully implemented as an ‘alternative activity’ provided it avoids being formulated in ways that undermine the commitment to not advance learning in other areas of the curriculum. In other words, book reading activities during ‘alternative to religion’ cannot be exclusively organized by Language Arts or Literature teachers, nor systematically tied to these aspects of the curriculum (which are compulsory for all students). Equally, book reading cannot be designed as an extension of other parts of the curriculum (i.e. History, Sciences, etc.). Consequently, in Spain book reading during the class hours of ‘alternative to religious education’ has to be framed in restricted terms: as an activity where an assorted set of books may be read to familiarize students with reading, the school library or other general skills. It cannot be systematically planned to incorporate other activities or teachers outside the time slots of ‘alternative’ and it is managed by teachers who may volunteer to lead these activities or must supervise students during ‘alternative hours’ as part of their work-schedule.

ICA has implemented a school-wide initiative to organize an ‘alternative to religious education’ program focused on book reading and the promotion of reading habits within the parameters I have just described. The program was coordinated by the school librarian and involved a heterogeneous set of teachers who where the team of ‘alternative education tutors’ – for example, in the classrooms I observed (one of them discussed below) one tutor was the school counselor and in the other the tutor was a physical education teacher. More crucially for this paper, the practical organization and slotting of ‘religious education’ and ‘alternative’ at ICA also created a social situation in which certain unusual relationships and interactions in the school could unfold. It is these conditions that I want to highlight as they produce what can be seen as a *natural experiment* (Hymes, 1974) that participants themselves exploited. On one hand, since enrolling or not in religious education is a decision that is completely unrelated to other aspects of students’ curriculum or academic standing, ‘religion/alternative’ classes were organized by temporarily re-grouping into the same time slots and classrooms students who otherwise were enrolled in different sections of the same year and/or in different educational tracks (e.g. ‘normal group’, ‘compensatory’, ‘support group’, etc.). On the other hand, given that the school is relatively large and is organized into various sections for each year, the teachers/tutors for ‘alternative’ may have little contact with these students outside these class hours and might not have much information about their skills and performance in other areas of the curriculum. In other words, these conditions open up the possibility that identities and expectations developed in other spaces of the school undergo transformations in the context of ‘alternative to religious education’.

Two ‘reading hour’ class groups were observed and followed for several months during the two years of fieldwork. In this paper I will examine in detail a second year group observed between April-June 2008 and in particular I follow the full reading of a specific book. This class

group was composed of eleven students from different educational tracks and cultural backgrounds (summarized in Table 1) and their teacher-tutor, Aurora (pseudonym), a psychologist and head of the counseling department.

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

There are several reasons behind this focus on Aurora's 'reading hour' group. First, fieldwork in the broader study provided more information on the background and trajectories of the students in this reading group as well as of the general work of Aurora as a school counselor. Second, following the full reading of a book permits conducting a more systematic longitudinal analysis of activity in the classroom within a temporal sequence that is structured according to curricular criteria in the institution (Stodolsky, 1988). Finally, as we will see, the content of the book I examine allowed for indexically-rich interactions between participants in the classroom. The focus book is titled *La Pepa*⁴: *1808-1812 Tiempos de Constitución* 'The Pepa: 1808-1812 Times of Constitution' (María Isabel Molina, Alfaguara Juvenil, 2007) and it is a historical novel for adolescents set in Spain, during the resistance to the French occupation, and the eventual proclamation of an independent constitution inspired by the Enlightenment. Two of the main characters in the book come from the Spanish colonies in America and colonial relations are part of the development of the story's narrative.

To recapitulate, the intersection of ICA's social history, its educational arrangements, students subjectivities, the curricular logic of 'reading hour' and the composition of this classroom create the conditions for a strategically and analytically rich case study. In the

⁴ *La Pepa* is the popular name given to the constitutional text that was passed in Spain in 1812. This Constitution was voted on March 19th, Saint Joseph's day (San José) in Spain. Pepe (m) and Pepa (f) are the colloquial equivalents of José (m) and Josefa (f).

following sections I will examine ways in which students' reading performances and interactions during reading hour provide insights into their positioning towards institutional arrangements and categories.

4. Results: Performances and interactions during 'reading hour'

4.1. Reading as performance in students' ears

The mechanics of book reading are fairly simple and consistent across the different classrooms that participate in the program. Teachers suggest or select a book for the class to read and copies of this book are distributed during class to each student and introduced very briefly (see Figure 1). The book is read in class in a read aloud round-robin fashion. Each individual student is asked to read aloud a portion of the text while the rest of the class follows the text silently. Teachers try to ensure that all students have a turn at reading aloud during each class period (and will follow a list or place order to ensure this occurs). Typically it will take several sessions to complete a book and this central activity can be followed by other activities such as looking up unknown words in the dictionary, posing and solving questions about the book (sometimes competing with other classes that have read the same book) or a visit to the school library.

INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

Students interpret reading aloud as a verbal performance in the sense formulated in the ethnography of communication (Bauman, 1986; Martin, 2003)⁵. For students, reading aloud is measured in terms of reading speed ('the faster the better'), speech volume ('the louder the better') and the ability to reproduce the words in the text with minimal hesitations, interruptions or corrections. These criteria unfold in detriment of a literary prose reading style (e.g. Ho Lai-ming, 2008) in which pauses or changes in intonation and volume are aesthetically relevant and a sign of reading competence. Further, they are followed by students despite teachers' repeated calls to pay attention to orthographic elements in the text that may indicate pauses or changes in stress during the reading aloud.

Redefining reading aloud performances in these terms, among other things, allows students to use a set of accessible criteria to assess and compare reading aloud skills against each other. Two dimensions seem to be relevant in this effort. A first aspect has to do with the 'raw amount of reading' (i.e. number of words or pages) that a student accomplishes during his/her turn. A second aspect has to do with the total length of the 'reading turn' and this dimension is related to how teachers' perceive and assess students' reading skills and disposition. 'Reading aloud' involves momentarily putting students in the classroom spotlight and exposes their behavior to public scrutiny. Students who perceive themselves / are perceived as 'competent readers' will seek out these turns and will attempt to expand them as long as it is practically possible, either by reading continuously longer or by 'allowing' interactions of different types (questions to the teacher, commentaries about the text or even peer play) to take place during their turn. Students who perceive themselves / are perceived as 'struggling readers' will attempt

⁵As explained above 'reading hour' does not play any role in the official curriculum so students' are never formally assessed or graded during these activities. Therefore, in this section all discussion in relation to "assessments" made by peers and the teacher is based on general ethnographic observations, participants' commentaries and my own analysis of students' behaviors.

to minimize their participation in the reading aloud. However, initially, all students are asked to read aloud during class so teachers collaborate with ‘struggling’ students to minimize the effects (i.e. length) of this public exposure through tactics such as assigning less text to read (a book page seems to be the operational minimum) and monitoring more strictly interruptions and disruptions.

Under these circumstances it is possible to construct simple quantifiable measures of students’ performances which can be: (a) contrasted with how students are informally assessed and ranked in actual practice by peers and teachers; (b) observe possible discrepancies between different sources of assessment and peer interactions/reactions; and (c) examine relations between these outcomes and students’ backgrounds and educational trajectories. Table 2 summarizes this analysis for the reading group based on average measures for the full reading of *La Pepa* (five sessions), an indicator of what I term students’ *reading fluidity*, the socially constructed reading skill that is assigned by different participants to each student during this classroom event.

INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

The figures in the table present a rather heterogeneous picture of students’ oral reading productions. From these numbers it is not possible to establish simple and clear relationships between students’ behavior and their cultural background or educational trajectory. For example, we find readers who are seen as having good reading fluidity among Spanish speaking Latin American students, such as Tony (146 w/m), who was in the process of being moved to compensatory education, among Romanian students, such as Nicoleta (155 w/m) who was enrolled in compensatory education and had arrived in Spain two years before, and among Spanish students, such as Miguel (156 w/m) who is considered the “best reader” in the class by

the teacher and his peers. Comparing Latin American students with Spanish students (the native Spanish-speaking students in the class) we find that, as a group, Spanish students read more (higher w/m) during their turns but tend to have shorter turns at reading. In contrast, as we will see below, Latin American students tend to have longer turns often occupied by questions, commentaries and peer play (elements that affect the total amount of reading they produce). Finally, Aurora, the teacher in this class, clearly identified two struggling readers in the group, Juan Pablo (Ecuadorian) and Adrian (Romanian), both enrolled in compensatory education.

However, the existence of a heterogeneous set of displays that are not clearly associated with students' background or educational classification does not mean that students are indifferent to how their peers read. To the contrary, they selectively use these criteria to position themselves in relation to their peers and the institutional arrangements and categorizations that are tied to themselves and other students. Examining this involves attending to other dimensions of reading as performance.

4.2. The body and social positioning during reading performances

The previous analysis has focused on reading as a vocal practice through which students display competence and open the terrain to peer comparison. Yet, reading aloud is also a fully embodied act in which the position and use of the body in relation to other 'materials' (the book, desk, other peers) plays an integral part of the event. As several studies conducted in very different educational settings show (Martin, 2003; Sterponi, 2007; Moore, 2008), students communicate a much more evaluative stance through the use of their body. The position they assume at their desks while they read, the way in which they hold the book and the orientation of their body (and gaze) during reading are elements that configure a general position of the

individual reader towards: (1) the activity of reading aloud - i.e. if it is approached confidently or anxiously; (2) the general classroom task requirements - i.e. if they are followed diligently, approached with disdain or ignored altogether; (3) their peers - i.e. their reading competencies and the social implications the display of these competencies has. Also, the analysis in this heading will show how bodily activity, among other things, informs about the institutional ordering and categorization students are subjected to (cf. Hjørne and Säljo, 2008).

Even though this analysis of the body draws primarily on field-note observations (vs. video-recordings or photographs) I was able to document some regularities and general patterns that will form the basis of my analysis. Drawing on the components I have outlined above it is possible to place student's embodied reading along a continuum of reading stances in which three configurations are clearly identifiable: 'relaxed' → 'formal' → 'anxious'. Table 3 summarizes how the body can be organized during reading at three points of this continuum.

INSERT TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

As Table 2 showed this reading group is a multilingual, multinational classroom with students placed in different educational tracks. In this group, all Romanian and Latin American students (except one who was in the process of being transferred) are enrolled in the same compensatory education class. However, they are significantly different in relation to their Spanish speaking and reading skills. In particular, Adrian is struggling with his second language learning and speaks and reads with difficulty – while Nicoleta seems to be flourishing, and this contrast seems to be unrelated to their total time in Spain or the educational provisions they have participated in. This difficulty did not pass unnoticed by a group of Latin American students (primarily Tony, Juan, Cristian and Claudia) who used it explicitly during 'reading hour' to make

visible differences among the ‘compensatory education students’ and redefine the basis of comparison in relation to their Spanish native peers. Excerpt 3 summarizes students’ actions around all of Adrian’s potential reading turns during the reading of *La Pepa* capturing how these processes unfolded across several class sessions:

Excerpt 2: (summaries from field-notes and audio-recordings) – Exclusion and group positioning towards Adrian

May 12

The class is finishing a short story called *Las Siete Sombras* (‘The Seven Shadows’) before beginning *La Pepa*. Many students are sharing books since there are not enough copies of the book for each individual student. Adrian and Tony are sitting together. Aurora calls out Adrian to read. Adrian holds the book with both hands and is inclined-crouched over the book. He reads very slowly and in low volume. Claudia complains that she can’t hear a thing and that she has lost track of where they are reading. Another student makes a similar comment. Aurora moves forward closer to where Adrian and Tony are sitting, to hear him better and control comments from other students. When Adrian is finished, Tony is assigned as reader. He takes the book from Adrian and reads reclined-relaxed with his back on the back of his chair, he reads loudly and clearly and when he is finished he returns the book to Adrian and lays his head on the table - apparently he complained about not feeling too well before and has been resting on his table during most of the class session.

May 14

The class begins to read *La Pepa*, which was presented at the end of last session. When it is Adrian’s turn to read he declines, explaining that he has to finish some homework. Aurora lets him do this and he spends the rest of the class working silently (or absent minded) at his desk. He does not read or follow the reading of the book.

May 19

Adrian does not show up for ‘reading hour’.

May 26

Adrian comes to class as they are starting to organize the reading activity; he sits at the back of the class in a corner of the room. Aurora assigns him as the first reader and he begins to read while other students in the class are settling down and preparing to read. Adrian reads slowly and at a low volume, crouched over the book that is resting on the table. Claudia asks who is reading and when she turns around and realizes it is Adrian she starts to laugh. Other students, in a recriminatory voice, ask her what she is laughing about and Aurora looks at her very seriously.

June 2

Adrian spends the class sitting alone apparently doing homework. Later in the class Aurora asks him if he is following the reading and he answers 'no'. Juanma laughs and Aurora gives a reading turn to Claudia - this is the last reading turn of the session and it is the second time Claudia reads aloud.

June 4

Adrian does not show up for 'reading hour'.

Across different reading sessions we see how simultaneously some of Adrian's peers, especially his Latin American classmates in 'compensatory education', show little patience with his reading skill and Adrian withdraws from the activity. Through their verbal commentaries (May 12) and laughter (May 26 and June 4) students categorize Adrian as an unacceptably unskilled reader. As noted above, Aurora to some degree shared this assessment in relation to Adrian and another student (Juan Pablo), but his Latin American peers did not meet Juan Pablo's turns with similar reactions – and Aurora was also aware that Adrian was the target of bully-like behaviors on the part of some students (May 26). The body is also a part of how these competencies are displayed and assessed. Adrian is the prototypical student displaying what I have labeled an anxious reading stance: he holds the book and/or places his body enclosed over the book as if 'hiding behind the book' or 'hiding the book and his reading'. The value of this embodied reading style is especially made visible -probably deliberately- during the session in which Tony and Adrian share a book and read in contiguous turns (May 12). Tony, during his

turn, displays an especially marked relaxed reading stance, orienting his body in practically the opposite configuration to Adrian and seems to treat both the reading task and Adrian's previous display with disdain. Adrian responds to these reactions by withdrawing from the activity and avoiding, if possible, any further reading. On several occasions he simply skipped class without justification (May 19 and June 4) and on others he was allowed to not engage in reading, claiming that he had to finish homework during this class period (May 14 and June 2). These later 'opting out' strategies required the approval of the teacher, who exceptionally granted permission to Adrian on these occasions and thus collaborated, alongside other students in the class, in the construction of Adrian as a poor reader (McDermott and Tylbor, 1995; Lytra, 2009).

What is relevant for the analysis is that not all students seem to be involved in this harassment towards Adrian, nor is this positioning displayed towards all poor readers. As said, it seems to be a strategy promoted by a group of Latin American students, who are institutionally labeled as educationally equivalent to Adrian (they are all placed in 'compensatory education'), and who in their displays during reading hour seem to question the objective basis of this grouping. During reading hour, academic background is much less relevant than Spanish language skills and, thus, Latin American students are able to reposition themselves alongside Spanish origin students in the class and display 'objectively' similar reading patterns. However, there still seem to be differences between Spanish origin students and Latin American students in the behaviors they display in class. The amount of banter they engage in and their derogatory attitude towards Adrian is not found in most of the Spanish origin students in this class (Jessica, Charly, Miguel), although Juanma does seem to be drawn into these routines (May 2). In this context, it is necessary to scrutinize in more detail the social implications and extent of this temporary re-alignment between Spanish origin and Latin American students. One set of

interactions that took place around the focus text in this group provide a window to these questions.

4.3. Peer interactions around the reading of La Pepa

As explained above, *La Pepa* is a historical novel in which Spanish colonial relations in America play a major role in the plot. Several of the protagonists in the book are defined in relation to their ethnic and birth origin within the colonial system and we find Spanish land-owners, ‘criollos’ (persons with Spanish heritage born in the Americas) and ‘indios’ (American natives). These categories, reproducing the social order of the time, have an evaluative component that is played out and made explicit throughout different scenes of the book. This content did not go unnoticed to the class and, among other things, was appropriated by the group of Latin American students for peer play. One of the characters in the book is the indigenous caretaker who accompanies Josefa, a ‘criolla’ girl, in her journey to Spain. This character is often referred to as ‘india’ in the book, frequently with pejorative connotations. The presence of this label in the text was taken up by some students for verbal play (Sherzer, 2002) targeted towards Tony:

Excerpt 3: Interaction around the label ‘india’ (I) (26/05/08)

It is Tony’s turn to read aloud. He reads with: (1) the book open and placed on the table, (2) his upper body relaxed on the table and (3) holding up his head with his hand. He attempts to read very quickly and does not adapt his intonation, however in some parts of the text, when he imitates a character who can hardly read he also stutters in his reading. The final line he reads in his turn is:

Text (pp. 69-70)

(...) El otro hombre le dio en la cara con el revés de la mano, sin ni siquiera mirarla y la tiró contra la pared.

-¡Calla, india! (...) // (...) The other man slapped her in the face without even looking at her and pushed her against the wall. - Shut up Indian! (...)

(...)

1 Tony: *¡calla india!*

(4)

2 Juan: *¡calla Tony!*

3 Class: ((laughter, especially among Latin-American students))

4 Juanma: *¡calla india!*

5 Cristian: *¡calla Tony!*

(...)

(...)

1 Tony: *shut up Indian!*

(4)

2 Juan: *shut up Tony!*

3 Class: ((laughter, especially among Latin-American students))

4 Juanma: *shut up Indian!*

5 Cristian: *shut up Tony!*

(...)

This sequence reproduces the first time ‘india’ was used for peer play in class and establishes the pattern that will be reproduced in subsequent episodes. The recontextualization of the term ‘india’ is led by Juan (a good friend of Tony, see above), who once it appears in the text (line 1), rephrases the original terms and introduces Tony as the new addressee (line 2). This insertion is received with loud laughter from other students in the class, especially from the Latin

American students (line 3), and different reiterations from two students. Cristian, who is Colombian, repeats Juan's utterance (line 5) and Juanma, who is Spanish, repeats the utterance in the text (line 4) – a significant difference I will discuss below.

This use of the term 'india' is part of a naming practice, relatively transient in this case, that illustrates how names are "laden with social history and power and are easily manipulated in the hands of others" (Rymes, 1999, p. 165). As it is used in this interaction by Juan it works as a ritual insult (Labov, 1972) and is inserted within a teasing sequences among a close-knit network of peers (Goodwin, 1990; Poveda, 2006). Also, the label itself, which draws on ethnic and historical relations that are made explicit in the written text, exploits several layers of social relations that might be present in this setting and are relatively particular to Latin American students. On one hand, indio/a could be seen as one of several emergent terms (e.g. 'Latino', 'negro', 'sudaca', etc.), each with its particular connotations and contexts of use, employed within the Latin American migrant community in Spain for verbal play and identification (Marshall, 2009). On the other hand, inserted within this sociological matrix, references to indigenous origin and the implied variations in skin color may draw on particular contrasts between the biographies of Juan and Tony. Juan and Tony are both from Ecuador but Juan is originally from Quito (the nation's capital) and Tony from Loja (an important provincial centre), thus Juan may be using as a resource the social and ethnic contrasts that are part of the centre-periphery sociological imagination in Ecuador by attributing, as a capital origin Ecuadorian, a rural and indigenous background to Tony (cf. Bourque, 2001) – noticeably, these contrasts are strategically maximized by Juan, since the actual socio-demographic differences between Quito and Loja, both urban-administrative nucleus, might not be that large.

This association between the appearance of ‘india’ in the text and banter around Tony is stabilized across successive occasions in which the token appears in the narrative. Further, as the following excerpts show, the appearance of the term ‘india’ in the text is received with laughter when it is the reading aloud turn of one of these students (i.e. Tony, Juan, David, Claudia, Cristian) or ‘india’ has pejorative connotations in the original text itself. This permits teasing sequences to take place in which the mere mention of the token is the object of humor and precedes the matching with Tony, which can be very schematic and may take place even when the target is absent (Excerpt 4):

Excerpt 4: Interaction around the label ‘india’ (II) (02/06/08)

It is Claudia’s turn to read. She reads: (1) holding the book with two hands and placed vertically on the table; (2) with her back relaxed on her chair. In the middle of her turn, the following part is read from the book:

Text (p. 80):

(...) Los hombres reían y la llamaban india salvaje (...) // (...) The men laughed and called her savage Indian (...)
(p. 80)

(...)

1 Class: ((several in the class start to laugh, including Claudia))

2 Aurora: ¡venga!

3 David: ¡Tony no ha venido!

(...)

(...)

1 Class: ((several in the class start to laugh, including Claudia))

2 Aurora: c’ommon!

3 David: Tony didn't come!

(...)

Excerpt 5: Interaction around the label ‘india’ (III) (04/06/08)

It is Tony’s turn to read aloud. He reads with: (1) the book open and placed on the table, (2) holding it with both hands and (3) sitting relatively straight on his chair. In the middle of his turn the following sentence is read:

Text (p. 102)

La cara de la india era inexpresiva // The face of the Indian was inexpressive

(...)

1 Class: ((laughter in the group, especially Latin-American students))

2 Aurora: ¡venga vale ya!

3 David: (¡venga indio!)

4 Aurora: continua Tony

5 Student: XXX

6 Class: ((more laughter))

7 Tony: ((continues reading))

(...)

(...)

1 Class: ((laughter in the group, especially Latin-American students))

2 Aurora: OK, enough!

3 David: (OK, indian!)

4 Aurora: continue Tony

5 Student: XXX

6 Class: ((more laughter))

7 Tony: ((continues reading))

(...)

To recapitulate, the previous section examined how some Latin American students in the reading group may be using their displays of reading fluidity to reposition themselves alongside Spanish peers and temporarily blur the institutional arrangements that set them apart. However, this reposition has limits and the previous excerpts show how this same peer network uses elements of the text for teasing and verbal play through associations that make especially visible the ethnic and national borders among participants in the classroom. These identity categories, which are mobilized through the use of a single lexical item ('india'), draw on elements that are independent from the institutional categories of ('ordinary' vs. 'compensatory education' student) that were relevant in the previous heading and tie students' actions to multiple orders of discourse distant in space and time from this ICA classroom (Blommaert, 2005). Further, Claudia, Juan, Crisitian and Tony, recreate social relations and experiences that are particularly relevant for Latin American origin students and relatively impenetrable to their Spanish origin peers. Consequently, in effect, they re-establish distinctions between peer groups in the class which, as I argued, they also sought to dismantle during other episodes of interaction – although, now the basis of this differentiation is set in other terms ('Spanish' vs. 'Latin American' adolescent) and for other purposes.

It is in this context that the participation of Juanma (Excerpt 3) in these sequences is especially relevant: the way in which he recycles the literal utterance of the text ('¡calla india!') and not the emergent associations in interaction as his Latin American peers prefer to do (Excerpts 3-5, e.g. '¡calla Tony!'), suggests that there are subtle limits, of which Juanma is aware at some level, as to how far he can penetrate into the social structure of this Latin American

student peer group and the jocular activity this network engages in - despite the disposition he has shown to do so across different episodes.

5. Conclusions

This paper presents successive analysis of different aspects of student actions during ‘reading hour’ at ICA. Although the analysis has decomposed actions into apparently discrete elements, these pieces unfold simultaneously and co-occur in actual classroom interaction and integrate into complete verbal performances and rituals that shed light on how students position themselves and their peers in relation to, among other things, the institutional categories that organize academic life at ICA. From this analysis there are two strands of discussion that can be developed, one tied to how literacy and identity are intertwined in this context and a second tied to how the data relates to the central theme of this special issue.

Students make use of printed materials and an apparently very scripted and traditional classroom routine (i.e. ‘round-robin reading aloud’) to simultaneously enact different identities that are relevant at different levels: institutional, linguistic, ethnic, peer-internal, etc. In short, the analysis makes visible the multiple dimensions of identity that unfold and are resignified in ongoing social interaction and emergent verbal performance (Moje and Luke, 2009). The performance elements I have focused on seem to deviate from teachers’ expectations and the official script for the event. They also seem to be the product of rather strategic displays on the part of students and thus one may be tempted to interpret these actions as forms of *resistance* (Willis, 1977; Luck, 2008; McLaren, 2003) but if this is the case we need to highlight how these acts unfold and the potential contradictions that emerge as they are played out in class. The analysis of students’ reading fluidity displays showed how peers redefined competence and

produced reading aloud turns which deviated from teachers' expectations of good reading. However, students did not disengage from a classificatory logic in this redefinition and, in practice, ranked each other within their revised criteria. Students' embodied reading practices seem to bear more directly on how they are institutionally categorized and it is perhaps at this level where we see a more explicit and direct confrontation with institutional procedures and arrangements. However, peer exclusion is also part of the program in the episodes I have presented and, therefore, a more focused attempt to dismantle the basis of educational tracking is weakened within these peer relational processes. Finally, Latin American students' jocular interactions around the text reaffirm the ethnic and national boundaries among students in the class and, again, foreground the relevance of a peer-relevant sub-structure of interaction in the classroom. In short, while institutional processes and categories do play a role in these classroom events, they do so alongside other concerns in students' agendas and thus the potentially political-critical component of their actions is diluted.

Returning to some of the central questions of this theme issue we also see how through their performances and interactions students bring into the classroom elements from multiple social spaces that can be defined as 'inside' and 'outside' in several ways and complicate simple dichotomies. *Inside/outside* clearly draws on a spatial metaphor of sociolinguistic relations (Sheeny and Leander, 2004) but to this initial distinction we must add *laminations*, the 'thickening' of relations and identities through experience and history (Moje and Luke, 2009) and *scale* (Blommaert, 2006; Nespors, 2004). 'Reading hour' is configured as a relatively marginal curricular space with little weight in students' academic trajectories but I have shown how, perhaps precisely because of this subsidiary role, students may use it to redefine how they are institutionally categorized in other curricular spaces outside this classroom (but inside the institution). Apart from these institutional categories, students are part of peer-networks in which

academic classification, cultural background and classroom relations overlap in ways that redefine for each episode who may be inside certain interactional spaces and who cannot penetrate them. Finally, the written material presented in class permits incorporating categories and social relations formed outside the classroom but at different temporal and historical scales, which include colonial relations, contemporary migratory movements, class relations across national settings, which students again strategically appropriate during classroom discourse. In other words, thinking about how students “bring the outside in” is a powerful way of opening the door to a new set of complex discursive relations that this paper has only begun to explore.

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Table 1: Students in Aurora's 'alternative' class (2007-08 school-year)

<i>Student</i>	<i>National Origin</i>	<i>Educational Track</i>
Juan	Ecuador	Compensatory Education
Tony	Ecuador	Compensatory Education (P)
David	Ecuador	Compensatory Education
Cristian	Colombia	Compensatory Education
Claudia	Ecuador	Compensatory Education
Juan Pablo	Ecuador	Compensatory Education
Adrian	Romania	Compensatory Education
Nicoleta	Romania	Compensatory Education
Jessica	Spain	Ordinary Class
Charly	Spain	Ordinary Class
Juanma	Spain	Ordinary Class
Miguel	Spain	Ordinary Class

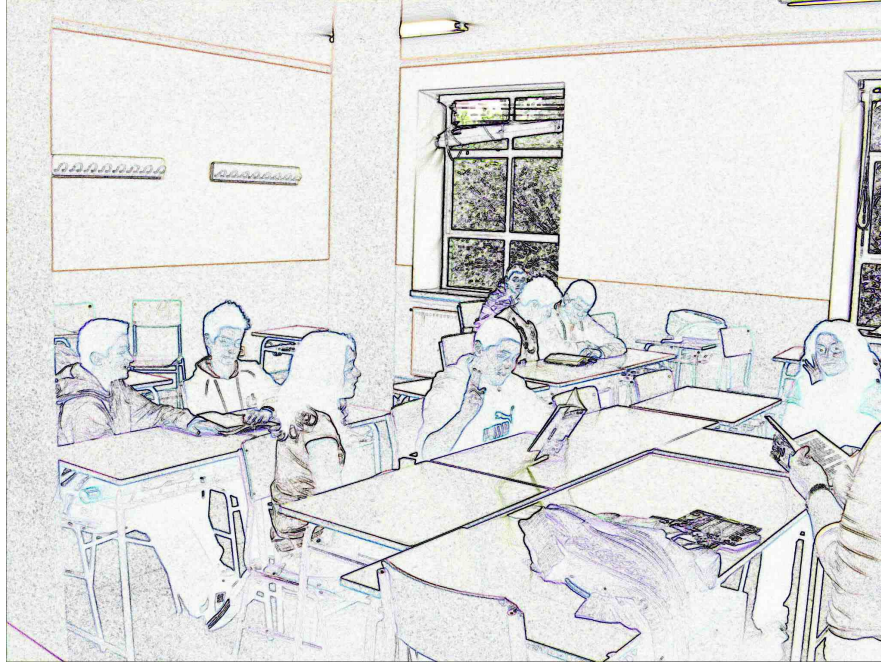


Figure 1: A book reading session during ‘reading hour’

Table 2: Quantitative measures of reading turns during the full reading of *La Pepa*

<i>Student name</i>	<i>Words per minute</i> <i>(mean)</i>	<i>Length of reading turn</i> <i>(mean in seconds)</i>
Juan	99	274
Tony	146	211
David	88	403
Cristian	87	299
Claudia	85	239
Juan Pablo	95	138
Adrian	50	126
Nicoleta	155	185
Jessica	123	201
Charly	118	274
Juanma	116	292
Miguel	156	191

Table 3: Continuum of reading stances communicated through the body

<i>Configuration</i>	<i>Dimensions of body composition</i>
'Relaxed'	Laying back on the chair / Laying down on the desk / Sitting side-ways on the chair / Holding head with one hand / Holding book with one hand / Folded book
'Formal'	Sitting straight on the chair over the desk / Book held with both hands / Book open and placed on the table
'Anxious'	Crouched over the table / Book held up vertically with both hands / Reading 'behind' the book